

11/28/22

The Honorable Judge Morrison
U.S. Federal Court, Southern District of Ohio

Dear Judge Morrison,

I am the father of Thomas DeVelin. I am reluctant to write this letter since it is obviously biased towards my son, but there are a few things which I feel need to be said that have not been mentioned to date.

As you are no doubt aware, Tom was a proud member of the Ohio Army National Guard. During a training week in McConnelsville in October of 2021, he and several other soldiers were given permission to leave the armory and meet at a nearby house for a Wednesday evening party. During the party, one of the soldiers who was inebriated produced a handgun and committed suicide in front of everyone before they could respond. I cannot imagine a more horrific incident to be a witness to and helpless to prevent.

The military and local law enforcement conducted independent investigations, and both found no wrongdoing by the people present. Tom and other soldiers present were given psychological exams by the military and found to be mentally healthy. However this event affected many people in unforeseeable ways.

Prior to the suicide, Tom was held in high regard by his military superiors. In 2020, Tom's unit was called up to prepare for riot control duties in Ohio. During their training, Tom and one other soldier were identified as the only two soldiers in the entire regiment to be issued live ammunition. These two were to be the very last line of defense behind the entire unit, which was to be armed with non-lethal weapons. This showed a high degree of trust in Tom's judgement and ability.

A few weeks before the suicide, Tom was selected to attend leadership training in preparation of promotion to sergeant. He completed this course just a few days before the suicide, and was told he would be promoted within a few weeks.

After the suicide, things changed. The promotion to sergeant never came. His leadership responsibilities as a corporal were taken from him. Although nothing was said, the military considered him persona non gratis.

Tom tried to act that the suicide did not impact him greatly, although he confided to my wife and I that he was distraught over the incident. I believe Tom maintained a façade of normality because he had been anticipating a deployment to Iraq, and felt that any mental issues would disqualify him from that deployment. In the end, he and the other soldiers present at the suicide were taken off the deployment list.

Unfortunately I did not recognize it at the time, but Tom's behavior changed after the suicide. In retrospect, I can say he visited us less often. His reason was that he was too busy working in Columbus. (We live in Waverly) When he did visit, his behavior was such that he seemed to be

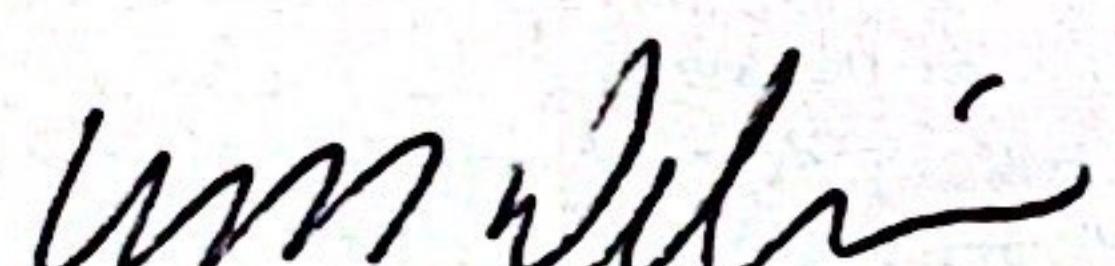
acting that everything was normal. Since his arrests and of learning more about his mental state, he certainly did not exhibit behavior to indicate what I now know to be his troubled mind.

Even before all these problems, my wife and I sometimes discussed that Tom, from an early age, seemed to have no "filter" regarding friendships. The difference between true friends and superficial friends was a lesson he needed to learn. I'm afraid he is learning it now in a very hard fashion. I will not blame others for Tom's actions, but I think he has showed poor judgement in his choice of friends.

Please know that whatever Tom's sentence is, his family will support him. My wife and I visit him every week at the Butler County Jail, and will continue to visit him on a regular, frequent basis no matter where he is incarcerated. We will help him in future career choices when he is free. As you know his future career will have limitations due to his conviction. I think of him and pray for him every day, and look forward to when I can see him as a free man.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely



William M. DeVelin

To: The Honorable Sarah D. Morrison, United States District Court, Southern District of Ohio
Re: Thomas Monroe DeVelin

November 30, 2022

Dear Judge Morrison,

My name is Toni DeVelin. I am Thomas DeVelin's mother. I would like to give you some insight on Tom, which I hope will help you arrive at a decision regarding his sentencing in your court.

All his life, Tom has been a kind person. He is quick to come to someone's aid and willing to help when asked. If ever a disagreement arose with his friends, he was the first to forgive. He considered everyone to be his friend. He has several cats for pets and seems to form bonds with other people's pets.

Tom is patriotic. From an early age, he had a calling to serve his country. Shortly after earning the rank of Eagle in Boy Scouts, he joined the Ohio National Guard and did their split option training, completing basic training the summer between junior and senior years, and advanced training immediately following graduation. He deployed to Afghanistan, where he served almost a year, and volunteered with another unit to serve in Washington, D.C., for another year. His unit trained for riot control in Ohio following the George Floyd jury decision when there was unrest throughout the country.

Tom is generous. He won't pass a Salvation Army kettle during the holidays without adding money to it. Following his commitment to the National Guard, he never asked us for money, preferring to use his Guard pay. He often used his funds to treat his friends to food or movies, not expecting reimbursement since they did not have jobs and he did.

Tom loves nature and the outdoors. He has an appreciation for wildlife and plants, and has spent many hours camping, hiking, and bicycling. He played high school tennis and soccer.

Tom has a great love for music. He played in the junior high and high school band, has experimented with the guitar, and spends many hours listening to many genres.

Up until the spring of this year, Tom was not in trouble and had no criminal record.

Tom is a good person who has committed a bad crime. He has acknowledged his wrongdoing and has cooperated with law enforcement throughout the case.

I believe a perfect storm of events caused him to make bad choices.

Tom struggled with civilian life following his return from Afghanistan. He tried several jobs but felt guilty in a comfortable life while other soldiers were still serving overseas.

While deployed, he developed a severe pilonidal cyst that caused an open wound. Treatments overseas and after he returned home were ineffective. When he returned stateside, the cyst became infected and caused him much discomfort and embarrassment. It prevented him from leading an active lifestyle. Two surgeries failed to resolve the problem. A third surgery successfully closed it but not without many weeks of inactivity to try and heal.

The subsequent governmental decision to withdraw from Afghanistan in 2021 was devastating for him to observe, as places he served were taken over by enemy forces and he was left to wonder what became of local aides who served the base.

About this same time, he ended a long-time romantic relationship that left him sad and confused.

On October 20, 2021, while with others at an off evening of a National Guard training, Tom witnessed the suicide of a close soldier friend. Despite heroic efforts of those present, his friend died. Military and civilian investigations cleared those present of any wrongdoing. However, that date forever changed him.

He began to use vaping products and drank far more than previously. He hid these behaviors from his family by distancing himself from us and insisting that he was fine when asked about his mental state following his friend's suicide. He was determined to show he was fit for his military duty.

Already disillusioned with military hierarchy, he became even more angry as he was removed from an upcoming overseas deployment and denied a rank promotion. His participation in dark web social groups with other disillusioned soldiers led him to post hideous things and emboldened him to commit crimes he would never have considered a scant two years prior.

At this writing, Tom has served over 150 days in Butler County Jail while awaiting the outcome of this case. His realization of the ripple effect of his actions has horrified him, leading to shame and many regrets. He has lost much as a result of his arrest, including his job in security, his independence, money, friends, and more. He agonizes over the pain he has caused his older sister, with whom he is close. His personal reputation, once a sterling example, is in ashes. He especially grieves the loss of his military career. He is also aware that a long incarceration would prevent him from possibly ever seeing his grandparents again, as they are in their 80s and not able to travel. He is mourning the idea that he will not see his aging pets. It is a lot to take in for a 25-year-old who is experiencing his first encounter with the law in a major way, and in a society where his crimes have a large social media interest and condemnation.

Prior to the arrest in this case, Tom was working with an online counselor, and was making progress. He is not able to have sessions with the counselor while in jail. There are not opportunities for counseling while he is still awaiting his sentence.

While in the Butler County Jail, Tom has participated in and completed the incarcerated veteran's program. He requested materials for Alcoholics Anonymous. When there was a shortage of trustees for laundry duty, Tom volunteered to work there and has since trained several other individuals in that job. He is journaling in lieu of counseling and has read books for guidance and morale boosting.

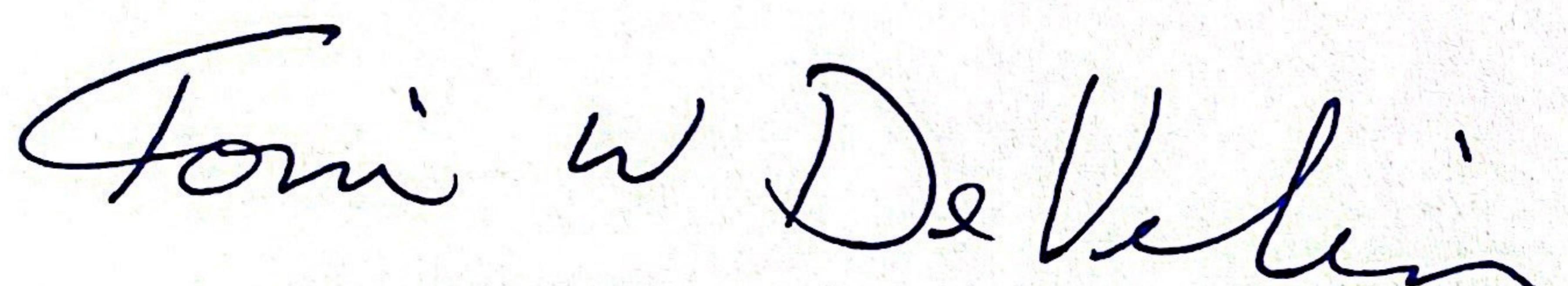
I feel that Tom is still a good person who regrets his actions. He will take the lessons learned in scouts and the military and life and move forward, still being kind and still being a productive person in society.

We love our son and will continue to visit and support him through his sentence and beyond. He has others who believe in him and have offered job or other support. His circle of friends and family is close-knit and have pledged their faith in him, both now and in his future.

We hope that in sentencing, you can take into consideration ours and others' opinions of Tom's character and consider options for him that would include opportunities for guidance, job training, or other education.

Thank you for taking the time to read about our son.

Yours sincerely,



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